

Mammals

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Importance

The American Southwest may have the greatest diversity of mammal species in the country. Information, however, is lacking on most mammal species. Many of the mammals in the southwest, such as shrews, pocket gophers, and pikas, are vulnerable to local extirpation due to their having geographic ranges that may be restricted to a single mountain top or other isolated island of habitat. Concern is also increasing for several species of mammals adaptive to arid habitats, such as kangaroo rats and pocket mice, and for several species of bats, many of which are now considered sensitive species.

Status and Trends

Fort Union National Monument (FOUN) is located on the southwestern edge of the Great Plains short-grass prairie. Few inventories of the plants and animals on its 720 acres had been conducted prior to a 2001-2002 inventory by the Museum of Southwestern Biology (MSB). Results from this survey provide baseline data for future inventory and monitoring.

Sixteen species of mammals were documented during the survey at FOUN (Table 1), representing 59.3% of the mammal species thought likely to occur at the park. Some groups



PHOTO: BRYAN HARRY

Badger

were not observed (e.g., shrews), likely due to the sampling methods used (i.e., no pitfall traps). Although sampling methods did not target them, bats were observed and thought to be Mexican free-tailed bats (*Tadarida brasiliensis*). Mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) droppings were found on the site.



RESOURCE BRIEF



PHOTO: STEVE CARSON, MFW

Ord's kangaroo rat

Discussion

A relatively large number of species occur at the park, given its small size and predominance of grassland habitats. Prevention of grazing at the park encourages grassland small mammals. However, fire suppression (to conserve the adobe ruins) may allow shrub encroachment that could, in time, alter the small mammal community.

Table 1. Mammals recorded during FOUN surveys, 2001-02.

Common Name	Scientific Name
Mountain cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus nuttallii</i>
Desert cottontail	<i>Sylvilagus audubonii</i>
Thirteen-lined ground squirrel	<i>Spermophilus tridecemlineatus</i>
Ord's kangaroo rat *	<i>Dipodomys ordii</i>
Silky pocket mouse	<i>Perognathus flavus</i>
Northern grasshopper mouse *	<i>Onychomys leucogaster</i>
Western harvest mouse	<i>Reithrodontomys megalotis</i>
Deer mouse *	<i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>
White-footed mouse *	<i>Peromyscus leucopus</i>
Rock mouse	<i>Peromyscus nasutus</i>
White-throated woodrat	<i>Neotoma albigula</i>
Southern Plains woodrat	<i>Neotoma micropus</i>
Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>
Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>
Pronghorn	<i>Antilocapra americana</i>
Elk	<i>Cervus elaphus</i>

* Species caught in the highest numbers.

